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With best wishes of the author

THE  
"MEDEA" OF EURIPIDES  
AND THE  
"MEDEA" OF GRILLPARZER.

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## THE "MEDEA" OF EURIPIDES AND THE "MEDEA" OF GRILLPARZER.<sup>1</sup>

TWENTY-TWO and a half centuries lie between these two tragedies which bear the same name and have the same heroine. One is the work of a writer who at the age of fifty had reached his full intellectual stature in the exhilarating atmosphere of Athens in the most splendid period of Greek history, Greek art, and Greek literature—the age of Pericles. The other drama is the work of a young Austrian poet, who, inspired by the play-loving, play-going Viennese among whom he lived, completed it when he was barely twenty-nine years old.

Euripides, who was born fifteen years later than Sophocles, had to adapt himself to conditions as he found them. The flower of Athenian tragedy, which had budded under Æschylus and reached its full bloom under Sophocles, was beginning to droop and fade. Coming at the time when he did in the development of the Greek drama—in a period

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<sup>1</sup>The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the different conditions under which the two works of art originated, the difference in motives, and the different treatment of the characters. Certain literature which treats of the relations between the two plays from other points of view, but bears incidentally upon my subject, may be cited:

Wilhelm Scherer *Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens in Deutschland und Österreich*. Berlin. 1874. pp. 235ff.

Prof. Dr. Hermann Purtscher, *Die Medea des Euripides, verglichen mit der von Grillparzer und Klinger*. Jahresbericht des k. k. Real- und Ober-Gymnasiums in Feldkirch. Innsbruck. 1880.

A. Trabert, *Franz Grillparzer. Ein Bild seines Lebens und Dichtens*. Wien. 1890. pp. 116ff.

Dr. Julius Schwering, *Franz Grillparzers hellenische Trauerspiele, auf ihre literarischen Quellen und Vorbilder geprüft*. Paderborn. 1891. pp. 102ff.

Karlmann Niederhofer, *Der Einfluss der Griechen auf Grillparzer*. Jahresbericht des k. k. Ober-Gymnasiums zu den Schotten in Wien. 1892. pp. 29ff.

Prof. Dr. H. F. Müller, *Euripides Medea und Das goldene Vlies von Grillparzer*. Jahresbericht über das herzogliche Gymnasium zu Blankenburg am Harz. Blankenburg. 1895.

of transition—Euripides could not have been other than what he was. The limitations that beset him were not of his choosing. He was hampered by the chorus, which was growing farther and farther away from the spirit of tragedy, by the limited number of actors, by the unities of time and place, and by the scantness and clumsy arrangement of the scenery. He was distinctly modern in spirit; but as the times were not yet ripe for a revolution in the drama, he had to put new wine into old bottles.

Grillparzer was the heir of all the ages between him and Euripides. He not only looked back upon the flowering time of Greek literature, but he knew Calderon, Lope de Vega, Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, and the writers of the romantic school. Old things had passed away, and all things had become new. There was a new heaven and a new earth in dramatic literature.

The German "Medea" contains about twenty-four hundred verses, or about a thousand more than the "Medea" of the Greek poet. It is much longer than any play of Æschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides. This is in accord with modern ideas, which allow, if they do not require, a fuller and freer treatment of dramatic material.

Very different is the opening of the two "Medeas."

Euripides has often been criticised—and this is certainly one of the most vulnerable parts of the poet's organism—for his way of painting in the background. The prologue became a mannerism with him. Instead of allowing the development of the plot to disclose the events that precede the action of the piece, he brings some one of the actors upon the stage at the beginning and makes him tell us what we should know for the proper understanding of the play. This appears more or less clumsy in different pieces. The prologue of "Medea" is one of the less objectionable. Medea's nurse expresses the wish that the Argonauts had never sailed to Colchis, as Medea would not have come to the Iolchian land, or now be living at Corinth. The Colchian princess is devoted to her husband, but he has basely abandoned her and her children and is about to marry the daughter of the

Corinthian king. Medea's distress is terrible; she lies without food, wearing away the time with tears. She does not raise her eyes from the ground, and no more heeds the admonitions of her friends than if she were a rock or a wave of the sea. She hates her children, and the nurse fears she will lay violent hands upon them or upon some one of her friends. From the tutor of the children we learn that Medea and her two boys are to be banished.

Grillparzer's "Medea" opens before the walls of Corinth with a beautiful view of the sea and a part of the city in the background. The morning has not yet dawned. The Colchian princess is intrusting to the bosom of the earth her veil and staff and all else that connects her with the cult of Hecate. She bitterly repents the past, but she has now broken with it and resolved to adapt herself to the manners and customs of her adopted country. A weak, unprotected, helpless woman, she will cast herself into the open arms of her husband, who, though he shunned her as a Colchian, will receive her fittingly as a wife. Jason appears, wrapped in gloom. No city will harbor him, no country receive him. He has come to Corinth, "the cradle of his golden time of youth," in the hope that the king, who sheltered him years before from his uncle's wrath, will again receive him. Creon, the king, and Creusa, his daughter, appear upon the scene. On Jason's assurance that he is innocent of the murder of Pelias, the king agrees to fulfill the pledges of guest friendship. He is loath to shelter Medea also, but finally consents to do so.

The second act opens in the royal castle of Creon. Medea is seated at Creusa's feet, trying, at her suggestion, to learn to sing a song and accompany it on the lyre, with a view to exorcising Jason's gloom and melancholy. Medea finds the fingers accustomed to the bow and spear clumsy for such a task, but persists when Creusa assures her that it will please her husband. When Jason returns he dismisses her, like a child, on some pretext, and gives himself up with Creusa to the pleasure of painting on the canvas of the present bright pictures of the happy youth they had spent to-



6      *The "Medeas" of Euripides and Grillparzer.*

gether. Medea returns, and in her excitement forgets her song. When Jason bids Creusa sing it, Medea refuses to surrender to her the lyre, and when he tries to take it from her she breaks it. At this moment a trumpet blast announces a herald from the ancient seat of the Amphictyonic council, who proclaims the banishment of Jason and Medea from the sacred soil of Greece for the murder of Pelias. The penalty for sheltering or protecting them after three days and nights is death, if it be a private man; war, if it be a city or king. Creon rises to meet the occasion and takes a momentous step. He bids the herald carry back the message that his daughter shall become Jason's wife, and that he will defend him before the council and against the world. He orders Medea to leave his house and his city. When she is told that she must go without her children, she says that before the evening grows gray they will give her the children, and the bride will wring her white hands and envy Medea's lot as compared to her own. She also threatens the others. So closes the second act.

It will be seen how much fuller is the Exposition in the German play. Instead of plunging *in medias res*, the author shows how it all came about and how the characters develop. In fact, Euripides commences at practically the same point where the third act of Grillparzer begins.

The golden fleece is mentioned only twice by Euripides. At the very beginning of the play the nurse speaks of the princely men that went after the all-golden fleece for Pelias, and, later, Medea says she killed the dragon that protected it. Like the lightning of an angry god the lurid gleam of the fleece is seen ever and anon, however, in the background of the German drama. When Medea is burying the things that unite her to her Colchian past she speaks of the golden fleece as the last and most important thing; it is the witness of the destruction of her family, bespattered with her father's and her brother's blood—a monument of Medea's shame and guilt. She had held it up as a shield against Pelias, and at sight of it he had gone mad and torn the bandages from his veins. Toward the end of the play Me-

dea feels inclined to go and fetch the fleece from its grave in the earth; but she imagines that her father's and brother's spirits brood over the golden token, and fears she might see her father's rigid features in its glow, and be driven mad. The golden fleece is the most coveted of the presents sent to her hated rival, and from the ashes of the ruined palace it gleams forth as indestructible as evil itself. It is as pregnant with woe for all who possess it as was the far-famed treasure of the Niebelungen.

The Medea of Euripides states that she killed Pelias by the hands of his own children—the most grievous way to die. Grillparzer leaves us for a long time in doubt as to whether his heroine murdered her husband's uncle. As Schwering says, our being kept so long in uncertainty as to her guilt reacts injuriously on the development of the drama. At last we learn that not she, but the golden fleece, was the occasion of his death.

The introduction of the herald of the Amphictyonic council, who announces the ban against Jason and Medea, was a happy thought of the German poet, as it paves the way for the new marriage, and makes it perfectly comprehensible.

It is difficult for us, with our modern ideas, to appreciate what banishment meant to the ancient Greeks. The chorus in Euripides's play says that death is to be preferred to it, with its attendant evils. Medea would have been an outcast and wanderer on the face of the earth; no Greek city would have received her, and she could not have returned to Colchis. It is easy to understand how the banishment of her children with her is accounted the severest form of punishment by Euripides, while perhaps the bitterest part of the penalty the German Medea has to pay is the fact that she *may not* take her children with her. In the earlier play, she tries to obtain permission for them to stay in Corinth; in the later, she will be satisfied if she may have them with her, for she may go whithersoever she will. The entrance of Ægeus, king of Athens, at the very nick of time, seems inartistic, and reminds us of the *deus ex machina*; his appearance provides Medea with a place of refuge, and gives the Greek poet an

opportunity to compose in honor of his beloved Athens a beautiful choral ode, which, however, has almost no connection with the course of the action.

Clumsy is the device in Grillparzer's play by which the chest containing the golden fleece is finally restored to Medea. It is no great tribute to Creon's intelligence that he so guilelessly believes all that she says about her presents to his daughter. It is of no special significance that these presents are different in the two dramas. In the earlier play, the Corinthian princess receives a robe of rich, rare work, and a wreath of beaten gold; in the later piece, it is a rich and splendid vessel placed on a large, gold-arched saucer, and covered over with the golden fleece, the whole being decked with a richly-bordered, magic cloth. Probably this difference arises from Grillparzer's fear that he may be accused of slavishly following Euripides in too many things. The irony of the situation is perhaps as strong in one case as in the other: the Greek Medea sends the presents as nuptial gifts, ostensibly to persuade the bride to be the children's advocate with her father; the German Medea sends them because Creusa has been so kind and gracious to her and is to be the mother of Medea's children, and Medea wishes to win her love. It is certain that Grillparzer gains nothing by making the nurse, who is known to hate Creon and his daughter fiercely, carry the presents to Creusa, and announce the catastrophe on her return. It is a master stroke of Euripides to have the innocent children bear the fatal gifts to the princess, who has been so kind to them; and few passages in Greek tragedy are so striking as the messenger's recital of the bride's awful death. The catastrophe is rendered all the more horrible by the aged father's falling on his daughter's body, and perishing with her. Grillparzer lets him live on, mainly to add to his misery, and partly to give him an opportunity to add to Jason's punishment by banishing him from the royal city.

How different are the closing scenes of the two pieces! The hate of Euripides's heroine for Jason will not end this side of the grave. She gloats over his poignant grief, and hides her own in order that he may get no consolation from

the sight of her woe. She is uncompromising and bitter to the last. She tauntingly bids him go to the house and bury his wife; and when he speaks of his grief at the loss of his children, she tells him to await old age, when he will mourn indeed. The Medea of Grillparzer is in a much gentler mood after the death of her children: her hatred of Jason has entirely vanished, and she speaks almost tenderly to him. She tells him that if her bosom were not closed to him, he would see the boundless grief that overflows it; and that when he feels he cannot bear his sorrow, he must console himself by thinking of hers, which is so much greater. Grillparzer weakens this last scene by bringing in his favorite refrain about the vanity of earthly happiness and fame. Medea's parting injunction to Jason is: "Trage! Dulde! Büsse!"

According to Euripides, Medea departs exultantly for Athens in a chariot drawn by winged dragons. Grillparzer dispenses with this device from the magic world, and sends her a wanderer to Delphi to learn what form of penance the gods require of her.

In the "Medea," as in the most of his other plays, Euripides found the chorus—that reminder of the origin of the Greek drama—a hindrance. It seems exceedingly strange, for instance, that these Corinthian women of the chorus, who are supposed to be loyal subjects of Creon, should know of Medea's plan to kill the daughter of the king, and her own children, without betraying it. The chorus takes almost no part in the action. The odes are beautiful in many cases, but they might be omitted without injury to the development of the plot. With Grillparzer, it is Medea's own better self that takes the place of the chorus and exerts a restraining influence upon her angry passions.

The Attic tragedians could count upon the main incidents of the stories that formed the basis of their plays being already familiar to their audience, as these stories were a part of the sacred history of the Greeks. The "Medea" of Euripides belongs to the heroic age—the time when men walked with heroes, demigods, and gods. In tragedies of this kind the characters are majestic and often superhuman. So vast

was the theater that there was little opportunity for that play of facial expression which is one of the resources of the modern stage. The actors wore high wigs, large masks, very thick-soled shoes, and thick padding, so that they looked larger than human. The rôles of women were regularly played by men.

The Colchian princess of Euripides is worthy of the heroic age to which she belongs. Her passions are stronger than those of ordinary mortals. She does not wish to be considered insignificant, or weak and gentle, but of a different temper—severe to her enemies and well-disposed to her friends. No one joining battle with her will easily sing a pæan of victory. Her husband was everything to her. She had saved him out of the midst of terrible dangers; for his sake she had miserably killed her brother, left her native land, and slain Pelias. When Jason basely abandons her, in spite of all this, she becomes a fury, a Chriemhild, a personification of revenge. Her mind and heart are set like a flint upon vengeance, and she is ready for any measure to obtain it. When the messenger comes to report the awful death of the princess and her father, she says she will hereafter count him among her benefactors and friends, and bids him tell the story slowly, as it will delight her just twice as much if her enemies perished miserably. She is so hard and unfeeling, and so laden with guilt, that we have little sympathy with her, as greatly as she is wronged. Only when she thinks of her children does she show tenderness, and then her cheeks pale and her eyes are suffused with tears. She cannot take her boys with her into banishment, as this would be worse for them than death; and she cannot leave them with her enemies, who would deride them and her. She resolves to kill them—a thing which will sting her husband most. Few things in literature are finer than the passage in which she wavers between slaying her children and allowing them to live. When they smile and look at her, when she sees their bright eyes, feels their soft skin, and smells their sweet breath, her heart fails her; but she recalls her resolution, and performs the deed.

The German Medea does not belong to the giant world; she is human in stature and human in heart. She has a violent temper, like her Greek prototype. She knows how to prepare potions that bring health or death, but she has not killed her father or her brother, and is no murderess. All despise her and look upon her as a savage because she is a stranger from a distant land and unacquainted with the customs of the country. The first words of Creusa cut her to the quick; but when the daughter of the Corinthian ruler asks forgiveness, Medea's heart melts. Kind and gentle words are new to her; she has been wounded grievously and often, but none stopped to inquire whether it had hurt. She adopts the Greek costume, and begs Creusa to make her weakness strong. So eager is she to adapt herself to the manners and customs of the country that she is ready to sit at Creusa's feet and serve her like a slave if she may learn what to do and what to leave undone. On Creusa's assuring her that men and gods forget whatever evil has been done in past times, Medea falls upon her neck. When Creusa finally persuades Jason to listen to Medea's song, the outraged wife is so excited at his coldness toward her and the warmth of his interest in Creusa that she forgets it. Creusa's prompting only causes her to give vent to her feelings in the words:

O ihr Götter—

Ihr hohen, ihr gerechten, strengen Götter!

After the sentence is pronounced, Medea, who has said that she is Jason's wife and will follow him into misery and death, insists that he go with her and share her banishment. She admits she is a horrible, monstrous being and has committed crimes, but it was always at his instigation and for his benefit. After the blow has fallen she seems stunned; her first plan is to get possession of her children; apart from that she tries not to will or think. She wishes Jason loved her, so that she might wring his heart by killing herself. This causes her to think of killing the bride; but she bids the thought depart into the blackness of night. After all, man is weak, and it is proper to give Jason time for repentance.

She tries to bring him back to her by painting a picture of their former sweet relations. After she has appealed to her husband on bended knees, and he has spurned her, she begs her ancestors and gods to pardon her for her weakness; she has recovered from it. Jason finally consents to allow her to take one of the children with her—whichever one will go. Her children are now all that is left her on this earth. She bids the one that loves her most to go with her into banishment; neither will come to her, but both flee to Creusa. This is her sorrow's crown of sorrow. Lying on her knees, she cries:

Wer glebt mir einen Dolch?  
Einen Dolch für mich und sie!

Here the Ascending Action reaches its climax. There is nothing more masterly or awe-inspiring in the whole realm of tragedy. Kneeling, she had begged for one of the children, only one—she would have died had she been obliged to do without the other—but not even one would come; both took refuge in the lap of her enemy. She is not free from sin, but she feels that her suffering is entirely out of proportion to her guilt. She herself will take vengeance. The children are Jason's, like him in form and like him in her hate; if she had their existence in her hand, and its pressure could annihilate all that they are and were and will become, they would be no more. Their lot will be no better if they remain with their faithless, infamous father, for stepbrothers and stepsisters will come to sneer and jeer at them and their mother, the savage from Colchis; they, however, will either serve as slaves or become base. What is it to live? She wishes her father had killed her when she was small, before she had suffered as she has. Her heart glows with revenge, and the most horrible thing is the nearest thing; he loves the children as he sees his ego, his idol, his very self, reflected in their features. He *shall* not have the children, and she *will* not have them. She is abandoned, cast off, and scorned. She has been called bad without being so, but she now feels she may become bad; horrible plans are taking shape within her; she shudders, yet she rejoices in

them too. She sees in her mind's eye the children and Creusa bleeding, dead, Jason tearing his hair. Why does Jason, for whom she has done everything, abandon and cast her off? Why does he drive the good spirits out, and bring revengeful thoughts into her heart? The children are finally brought to her for a last farewell, but they try to hasten away. One of them says that his father loves him because he resembles him, and that he is going to stay with his father and the good woman. This reminds Medea how much he really looks like his father, how he speaks like him. Her heart softens when the little fellow takes off his upper garment, puts it round his younger brother, and, embracing him, lies down to sleep. The innocence of the children reminds her of the innocence and happiness of her own girlhood. She awakens the children and bids them twine their arms about her. They can sleep, and yet they were never in the hands of a worse enemy. She must flee to-day, and leave them to her enemies. Their father weds his new love; to-morrow she will be wandering foot-sore, without husband and children, alone in the wide world—she knows not whither. They, however, will rejoice and laugh at her; the children will hang upon the stranger's neck, estranged from their mother, far from her forever. It is now too late to forgive; to avenge Creusa's death they will come and kill her and the children. Before any one can come she hastens into the colonnade and commits the deed.

If we turn to a study of the other characters in Euripides's play, we find that none approaches the protagonist in importance. We must next throw the searchlight of investigation upon Jason, Medea's unworthy spouse. There is little to recommend him; as Medea says, he has turned out the basest of men. He is the embodiment of selfishness and vanity. His reasoning might have served as a model for the sophists who flourished in Euripides's day. After basely abandoning his wife, who has always idolized him, and contracting a marriage with a Greek princess, he has the assurance to tell Medea that in the marriage he has shown himself wise and prudent and a great friend to her and the chil-



dren. In fact, he says he cares nothing for the new wife, but sought the alliance merely on Medea's account and the children's, in order that they might escape poverty and be happy and prosperous in the shadow of the throne. He pretends not to wish her banished, but he makes no effort to have the ban removed from her and the children. He plumes himself on his readiness to serve her in any way and on his desire to make her banishment as light as possible. Although he appears willing to see them banished, Jason seems to take great interest in his sons and their future. It is a deathblow to his hopes when they are killed. In his righteous indignation he wonders that Medea can look upon the light of the sun after such a deed. As terrible as his punishment is, we feel that he got only what he deserved, and we can have little sympathy with him.

As selfishness is the ruling passion of the Greek Jason, so ambition, that higher form of selfishness, is the most marked characteristic of the German Jason. He alone exists in the wide world, and all else is only stuff for deeds. Full of ambition, he sports with his own happiness and that of others. Whoever stands in the way of his glory, Jason ruthlessly strikes him dead. He does only right, yet right is what *he* wills. In gloomy Colchis he was attracted by Medea, but he never really loved her. He determined to win her merely because she held out against him. Now, under the sunny skies of Greece, he realizes what a mistake he has made. Now he is hated for her name's sake. Horrible rumors from Colchis injured him in Iolcus. The citizens looked askance at his barbarian wife and her magic art. His uncle had withheld his inheritance from him on her account. Because of that uncle's sudden death his native city had banished him. Since leaving Thessaly he has been a wanderer on the face of the earth, a horror to human beings, and a terror to himself; he has no house, no resting place or abode. At Corinth he is impressed most deeply with the contrast between past happiness and present misery. Here he sees the sweetheart of his youth, from whom he is now separated by a great gulf; here he visits places that are redolent with sweet

memories, and here, too, he finds that the Jason who had been almost worshiped like a god before starting on the Argonautic expedition attracts now not the slightest attention. The scepter has departed from him. He reproaches the gods with making his morning so bright if his evening is to be so dark. In the play he is always gloomy when he talks with Medea, but he is not always unkind. He says that their misfortunes are not his fault or hers. When he had to choose between not receiving his inheritance and giving up his wife, he clove to her, and now he tells Creon that he must receive him and her or neither, although he would be inexpressibly relieved if she were gone, for he cannot breathe freely when she is present. At times he is hard, cold, and contemptuous, and treats her as if she were a child. His whole nature has been changed by misfortune. His sunny disposition has now become as gloomy as Medea's Colchian home. He expresses solicitude about his children's future, but he seems to have little real affection for them, and they evidently love him little more than they do their mother. When Creon decides to carry out the understanding of early days and give him his daughter in marriage, and to banish Medea, Jason at last casts off his Colchian wife. She must go into the wilderness, she who has ruined his life. Compassion alone has kept him at her side. Hitherto he has felt that they must hold together, but now it is plain that the gods have cursed their alliance. Even now he does not abandon her, but an edict of the higher powers drives him away from her. When his affianced and his children perish, when the king drives him away as one polluted, and when the countryman refuses to give water to the wanderer who is perishing from thirst on learning that he is Jason, we must agree with Medea that he has reaped only what he has sown. At the same time we cannot help feeling that, when overwhelmed by such a tremendous wave of misfortune and exposed to such a temptation, it was only human for him to act as he did. None but the strongest character could have resisted.

The Creon of Euripides is the ordinary Greek *τίραννος* of Athenian tragedy. According to tradition, not he but Jason,

who had tired of Medea, suggested the new marriage, but he is a party to Jason's outrageous treatment of Medea. He appears only once in the drama, and then but for a short time. As Medea is a barbarian, and he probably considers her hardly human, it is not likely that he thinks he has committed any great wrong. Because of her threats and her skill in magic he tells her she must leave his land at once. He thinks that he has made a very generous concession when he finally allows her to remain the whole day.

The Creon of Grillparzer is very much the same sort of character. It is striking how intense Medea's hate of him is from the very first. She is constantly addressing him or speaking of him most ironically as "*der gerechte König*." She cannot bear the sight of him, and is unwilling to talk to Jason when the king is present. He is not without kindly impulses, however. He lays his hands on the children's heads, and calls them:

Du arme, kleine, nestentnommne Brut.

He shows considerable feeling even for the barbarian woman when her children flee from her. He is so blinded by selfishness, and so wrapped up in the belief that Medea is a monster that he is surprised when Gora reproaches him for his treatment of her mistress, and he calls the gods to witness that he did not mean to wrong her. As compared with his Euripidean prototype, his guilt is greater, since he is responsible for the new marriage; but he lives on to have ever before him the misery he has caused, and the measure of his atonement runs over.

We get a charming picture of the king's daughter, who does not appear on the stage in Euripides's play, from the recital of the messenger. We see her watching eagerly for Jason, but veiling her eyes and turning away her all-white cheek at the approach of the children. Jason finally persuades her to look upon them kindly, and to accept the presents. After his departure she puts on the fine robe, and, placing the golden wreath on her locks, she arranges her hair, smiling at her lifeless image in the bright mirror.

Creusa is not only one of the most important characters in this play of Grillparzer, but she is in many respects the most charming of all his creations. Simple and natural, as well as exceedingly graceful, is the way in which she first greets Jason and leads him toward her father. The king has doubted his innocence, but she never has. She wept that people could slander him so. She has always been partial to Jason, and shows plainly that she loves him. In the never-to-be-forgotten days of their youth she always took sides with him, and was hostile to his rivals even in friendly sports. Thinking that Medea is a monster, a savage, she utters words that seem very unkind. When she sees how Medea is hurt she pours balm into the wounds, and wins her over at once. She invites the Colchian woman to go with her, and undertakes to teach her to be a Greek. Medea almost worships her who is so kind and artless, so beautiful in body and soul. She compares the Corinthian king's daughter to a white dove that hovers over this life without wetting a single feather in the mire in which ordinary mortals struggle. Creusa is certain of herself, and at one with herself—a quality that Medea greatly envies. She knows how to drive away Jason's gloomy mood. The children seize her round the neck the very first time they see her, and after a few hours they love her as if they had known her for years. When Creon decides to banish Medea and give his daughter to Jason, Creusa questions whether this step is right, for if she and her father and Jason do right no one could injure them. She knows at heart that it is *not* right, and the fact that she does not refuse to marry Jason is her fatal weakness.

The nurse of Euripides is a humble servant who keenly feels her mistress's woes. She takes little part in the action. Her main function is to make us acquainted with the events that precede the opening of the play and with Medea's wretched state of mind. In spite of Jason's baseness she says that she does not wish him to perish, for he is her master.

Gora, the nurse in the German piece, is a much stronger

and more important character. She is the embodiment of all that is Colchian, and is constantly reminding Medea that she too is a Colchian, and inciting her to take vengeance on her foes. She speaks mockingly to her mistress about Jason's love when Medea buries the chest and tries to bury with it the past which Gora is determined she shall not forget. The only bright point in Gora's sorrow is the fact that she sees by their example that there are gods and retribution. If Medea will lament her unhappiness, she will comfort her, but her mistress shall not fail to acknowledge it. She prays to see the avenging lightning strike Jason, the traitor, and then to die. She teaches Medea's children that the Greeks are deceitful people and cowardly. When the blow falls she tells Medea that she had tried before this to induce her mistress to leave Jason; now she wishes her to stay for vengeance. She has the courage to defy the king and Jason to their faces. When Medea is prostrated because her children flee from her, Gora begs her to master herself, and not allow her enemies to enjoy the sight of her grief. This act of the children broke Gora's heart and courage, as she recognizes in it the hand of the gods. Medea's courage rises as the nurse's falls. Gora is frightened at Medea's plans for vengeance, and tries to calm her. She is really terrified, and says that she has horrible forebodings when Medea, who, now that she has fully settled upon her plans, is the self-possessed Colchian princess again, imperiously bids her to carry the gifts to Creusa. On returning from her frightful mission Gora says that she was obliged in her old days to help unwittingly in such a dark deed. She advised vengeance, yet what vengeance! It is a favorite device of Grillparzer to make one of his characters rebuke the principal persons toward the end of the play for their actions which caused the catastrophe. Gora does so in this piece, and it is certainly with a view to this that her rôle is such an important one.

The children themselves take but little part in the action of the Euripidean "Medea." Only twice do they speak, and then we hear their voices without seeing them: they cry out

in terror because their mother is about to kill them. Charmingly is the scene described in which the servants, who are delighted that Jason and Medea seem reconciled, rejoice to see the children. One kisses the hand, another the golden hair of the little ones.

We have already noticed what an important rôle they play in the drama of Grillparzer. They are shy of their father, and fear their mother, but they fall in love with Creusa at once. Æson, who bears the name of his father's father, is the elder, the favorite of his mother, the image of his father. Absyrtus is meek and gentle, with the face of her lamented brother, for whom he is named. On Medea's asking the children what their mother has done to them that they flee from her and turn to strangers, one of them replies that she wishes to take them again upon her ship where it is dizzy and close. How like a child this answer sounds!

In conclusion, both dramas are great—each the work of a skillful playwright and a true poet. Euripides treated the subject in a way that suited his times and surroundings. His "Medea" was composed for an audience that sat in the shadow of Hymettus, yet there is much in it that must appeal to all ages and all races of men. Grillparzer is a follower, but no slavish imitator, of the Greek poet. He struck into his own path, and his treatment is better adapted to modern notions. Although his personages are less laden with guilt and less remote from human sympathies, they have not perhaps such vigor and such strong individuality as the principal characters of Euripides. The two noble tragedies are a proof that the spirit of true poetry is not bound by place or time.



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